

# AT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL MIX POLITICS WITH SOCIETY

## Crowds of Delegates Fill Washington Now

Society Returning There Asks Without Delay for News of Real Condition of the First Lady of the Land.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21. EVERYBODY who comes to Washington just about now, and that is a good many, for besides the usual and constant stream of tourists there is an unusual crowd of delegates to this or that conference, convention or congress, asks almost the first thing, how Mrs. Harding "really is" and what about White House plans for the winter.

Mrs. Harding is improving steadily, and more rapidly than her friends and her physician had dared to hope. At the same time she was desperately ill, and it is going to take time for her to get back to normal health. And "normal health" in Mrs. Harding's case has not been anything to boast of for the last eight or ten years. If her body was only as strong as her will—well, it would be a different matter. The trouble is that strong-willed spirit of hers has driven the weak flesh too hard—quite too hard—and she is paying the penalty.

Mrs. Harding is able to sit up and take nourishment. But that's about all one can say. She has been sitting up in bed for as much as a quarter to half an hour a day lately. Once she was allowed to sit up in chair for a few minutes—about ten minutes they tell me she should know. She has "recovered a few friends," which sounds quite wonderful when one has been as ill as she has.

What really happened was that Gen. Dawes—Charles Gutes—"Hell-n-Maria" Dawes, who was the President's guest over the week end, stuck his head in the door before leaving last Tuesday and gave his hostess greeting. And the Secretary of War, John Weeks, who had been having a little conference with the President, was his companion on the "visit."

Gen. Dawes, as the White House guest, or rather "the President's personal guest" for the week end, is about the first house guest to be entertained there since Mrs. Harding's illness. He had been in New York making one of those nice out-of-pocket speeches of his, which set the whole country chuckling. One gathers that he said several mouthfuls in that address, the course of which he alluded to the members of Congress as "a conglomeration of peewees" and then, as someone put it, he came down to Washington to listen "for the echo." He's a great Gen. Dawes, and between ourselves he enjoys his own extravagant and effective hurling of hard hunk of language quite as much as the public does.

**Harding May Speak.** He stayed over until Tuesday, long enough to affiliate with a Chicago Bar Association committee that had come to Washington to invite and urge the President to address the association at one of its monthly meetings, on a non-political subject, and preferably at the November or December meeting. The President is reported to have considered the matter favorably—it would be after Election Day when he could not be suspected of doing any campaigning—but was unable to make a promise at this time. Gen. Dawes returned to Chicago with the committee, and hopes a little later to connect with Gen. Pershing for a hunting trip, out in the West, Utah—if memory serves.

As for the White House plans for the winter, it has none so far as formal or social entertaining goes. It has been definitely announced that the President and Mrs. Harding have reluctantly abandoned any formal social program for the coming winter, as Mrs. Harding's physician assures them that any such exhausting series of official hospitalities as those of last season are quite beyond Mrs. Harding's strength and would result in a complete collapse. That, of course, means that neither the great New Year's Day reception nor the four big State receptions in honor of the diplomatic corps, the judiciary and Congress of the United States and the officers of the army and navy, which usually come about two weeks apart in January and February, will be attempted. They are exhausting ordeals for the hosts—the long standing and the shaking hands with from fifteen hundred to three thousand people within a couple of hours on each of the nights.

There seems no doubt that these big crushes will be quite out of the question. But, realizing Mrs. Harding's dauntless spirit and her firm intention of doing her whole social duty, people are telling themselves that some less trying way of meeting the social demands will be found. Perhaps—perhaps not! It will, of course, depend on her progress. Every one realizes that if she is able "all the king's horses and all the king's men" will have difficulty in "holding" Mrs. Harding when it is a question of falling down on her job as mistress of the White House and the nation's official hostess.

So, while the announcement is taken in good faith, as a general release to other hostesses of all dates unconditionally, so that the others may make their plans for the coming season without danger of colliding with the White House—still, no one is going to be greatly surprised if after the first of the year the White House takes a little more part in official entertaining than there is at present any prospect of its doing.

**Winter Plans Uncertain.** Winter plans are of course to a large extent awaiting the actual return of the social leaders—in the Diplomatic Corps, in the Administration circle and in the Congressional set—to say nothing of the smart resident set which disperses itself here during the season. But the official reception at the Rumanian Legation last Sunday, in honor of the coronation of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie in far off Alsace-Lorraine, was regarded as the first official function of the budding season. It was a lovely party, and the loveliest thing about it was the hostess, Mme. Nano, wife of the Charge d'Affaires of the little Balkan Kingdom. She's a little beauty, anyhow, and last Sunday afternoon she was simply radiant.

The reception was given at the legation, the house at 1507 Twenty-third street, which Washington had for many seasons regarded as the Robert Thompson house—Col. and Mrs. Robert M. Thompson, you know—and was arranged to learn about eighteen months ago had been bought by the Rumanians to serve as their legation. It is rather a curiously built house, of the English basement type, with the dining room on the lower floor, a big music or living room above that, and a library at the opposite end of the house, with a wide, beautifully proportioned gallery connecting the two rooms, a little more part of the top of a circular stone stairway that the Charge d'Affaires and Mme. Nano welcomed their guests. And

the guests being largely members of the diplomatic corps and the group of American officials, mostly from the State Department, with which they are most closely associated. These had a beautiful time greeting one another and talking over their summer experiences and activities. It was the first party at which they had at all generally gathered since their return.

The Secretary of State and Mrs. Hughes were early arrivals. Mrs. Hughes looked rested and refreshed by her weeks in the country, and full of her wonderfully interesting experiences during her Brazilian trip. The Serbian Minister and Mme. Grouitch were constantly the center of a group from which arose lamentations at their approaching departure. The Henry Getty Chiltons, just in from Michigan; the Charge d'Affaires of Poland and Mme. Kwapiszewski, who had been in New York all the week; Mr. J. de Lagerberg, the Charge d'Affaires of Sweden; Dr. Lesinoff of the Bulgarian legation, the Walter Tuckermans, the Harold Walkers, the Charles Warrens, Prince Eugene Labomirski, Major Quakemeyer of Gen. Pershing's staff, Dr. L. S. Rowe of the Pan-American Union, these were some of the people one noticed chatting animatedly.

**"The Bachelors" Were There.** The "British Embassy bachelors" were out in force. As the afternoon wore to a close, and the reception took on a more informal air, and dancing became the order of the day, they came to the fore as new useful partners.

There have been rumors from time to time that the Bibescos were not coming back. But the present information is that they are. The last news of them was from London, where Prince Bibesco was reported as getting her London house in order, packing and storing, and generally disposing things, so that the house might be sold, or rented, if forget which. But anyhow it presaged an expectation of a considerable absence on her part.

The furnishings in the legation here in Washington are all either the Bibescos

or perhaps a few of the fundamentals left to the Rumanian Government. And while the house itself has not been altered since the Thompsons had it, the furnishings certainly bespeak both personal and national individuality. The furniture in the living room—which in its time probably played many parts, serving on occasion as ballroom or music room—was all pushed back against the wall the other day to make room for dancing. But even so, the room had an effect of hominess and comfort. Odd lovely things were about and brilliant touches of color, sometimes a trifle bizarre but always stimulating and full of character. In the library there were people and books, of course, and more people. Really one couldn't see the room for the people—which was distinctly annoying to them! The only impression one had of it aside from the books and people was of a sketch of King Ferdinand smiling down from the mantel.

In the dining room it was a little easier to study the details. It was a big, square room, with walls of dull gold and woodwork of peacocky blue—or green—and the same greeny-blue tones appearing in the furniture. I don't know that I've seen just that color in furniture, except that they have quite a little of it in the Leo House, one of Washington's newest and most attractive hotels. That rich, deep blue-green enamel with cane panelings. It looks very smart and sophisticated somehow—up to date and full of pep. And it certainly was a wonderful combination at the Rumanian Legation—with the dull gold walls of that dining room and the table fairly glowing under its burden of delicate, and decorated with great clusters of yellow chrysanthemums in the tall, beaten silver vases. It was all quite stunning, only that personally I wanted to get Mme. Nano in her long, drapery white velvet into that setting and see how infinitely becoming she was to it. She was busy receiving, however, and did not get into that picture while I was there.

The Thompsons, by the way, who were scarcely in Washington last winter—and certainly left an aching void—have taken the Thomas Nelson Page house at New Hampshire avenue and K street, and are to take possession early next month. I believe they are due there on November 7, when Col. Thompson will bring with him Lord Louis Mountbatten and his bride, who arrived in New York a week or two ago, and after a few days there started on a tour of the United States, as guests of and personally conducted by Col. Robert Thompson, in his private car. Mrs. Thompson was not well enough to go along on that trip with the responsibility of playing hostess to "a scion of British royalty" and his bride—heralded as the richest girl in Great Britain—so their daughter, Mrs. Stephen Pell of New York—(whose son, Robert Thompson Pell, recently married Alice Harding, the youngest daughter of W. P. G. Harding of the Federal Reserve, you remember) went along as her father's chaperone, while Mrs. Thompson went down to Hot Springs to rest and gather her forces for the whirl of entertaining—diplomatic and official, as well as merely personal—in which the Mountbattens are sure to be engulfed when they get here. Her stay is not to be a very long one, but it will be very, very busy!

### Long Unused.

The Thomas Nelson Page house has not been used for several years, but as last summer it pleased one to find oneself at a royal wedding reception, the one which the Serbian Minister and Mme. Grouitch gave at the time of their young King's marriage to the lovely daughter of this Rumanian royal pair, who were crowned last Sunday—was by no means the only big party of the week. There have been several for the Grouitch—the retiring Minister of Serbia and his attractive American wife, had "sat under" for six years in the

suddenly on the eve of his departure for Italy. The Thomas Nelson Pages came home (Mr. Page totally disagreed with President Wilson's attitude toward Italian questions at the peace conference and resigned in protest), and during the following summer, before they had resumed possession of their house, Mrs. Page died. Mr. Page is here quite frequently for a few days at a time, but he stays at a hotel, and the house has not been consecutively occupied since the Italians gave it up. But I believe the Thompsons are taking it furnished, "as is," and it is one of the most attractive houses in Washington—pure Colonial in architecture, with its feature a wonderful big library on the second floor stretching almost across the entire front. The most wonderful party I ever went to was the one the Italian Ambassador, di Celleri, gave there on armistice night, November 11, 1918, when he had already had a party arranged in celebration of his King's birthday, and turned it into a great big official jubilation over the armistice. My, but that was a wonderful night!

The Rumanian reception—which I have dwelt on considerably length because it was picturesque and "different" (and it tickles one's democratic American soul to be going to a long distance coronation reception, just as last summer it pleased one to find oneself at a royal wedding reception, the one which the Serbian Minister and Mme. Grouitch gave at the time of their young King's marriage to the lovely daughter of this Rumanian royal pair, who were crowned last Sunday)—was by no means the only big party of the week. There have been several for the Grouitch—the retiring Minister of Serbia and his attractive American wife, had "sat under" for six years in the

Society had its first party of the season—a radio party—with a special program, given out near Pittsburgh and listened to by the members of the Pennsylvania Society in Washington. It was clever of Clyde Kelly, the president of the organization, to make it a radio party rather than one in honor of some distinguished Pennsylvanian or group of Pennsylvanians. For in these pre-election days one can't count on star guests or leading official lights. They are quite likely to be very very busy somewhere else when the time comes. But the radio party was a grand success. Lots of people who talk very glibly about radio and listening in and have the patter at their tongue's end don't really know a thing about it. I admit I didn't and I felt horribly behind the times until I realized that nine-tenths of the glib chatter about radio is all bluff. Most of the people you ask about it, if you get right down to it, admit that they have no actual experience with it—"even as you and I."

Also there has been quite a little entertaining for Mrs. Albert Bissell, daughter of the Postmaster-General and Mrs. Work, who has been visiting her parents at Wardman Park Hotel for about ten days.

### Much Entertaining.

And there has been a lot of quiet entertaining for the former Vice-President and Mrs. Marshall, who arrived in town last Tuesday night and are at the Willard. Quite like old times. They dined the night of their arrival with their old cronies, Judge and Mrs. McClord, the former of the Interstate Commerce Commission. They had come because President Harding had very graciously put Mr. Marshall—whom he had "sat under" for six years in the

Senate—on the commission he had to appoint to find out the truth about coal. And that commission had its organizing session last Wednesday. Their friends are delighted that Mr. Marshall is on it, for it means that they will be quite a good deal in Washington for some months to come.

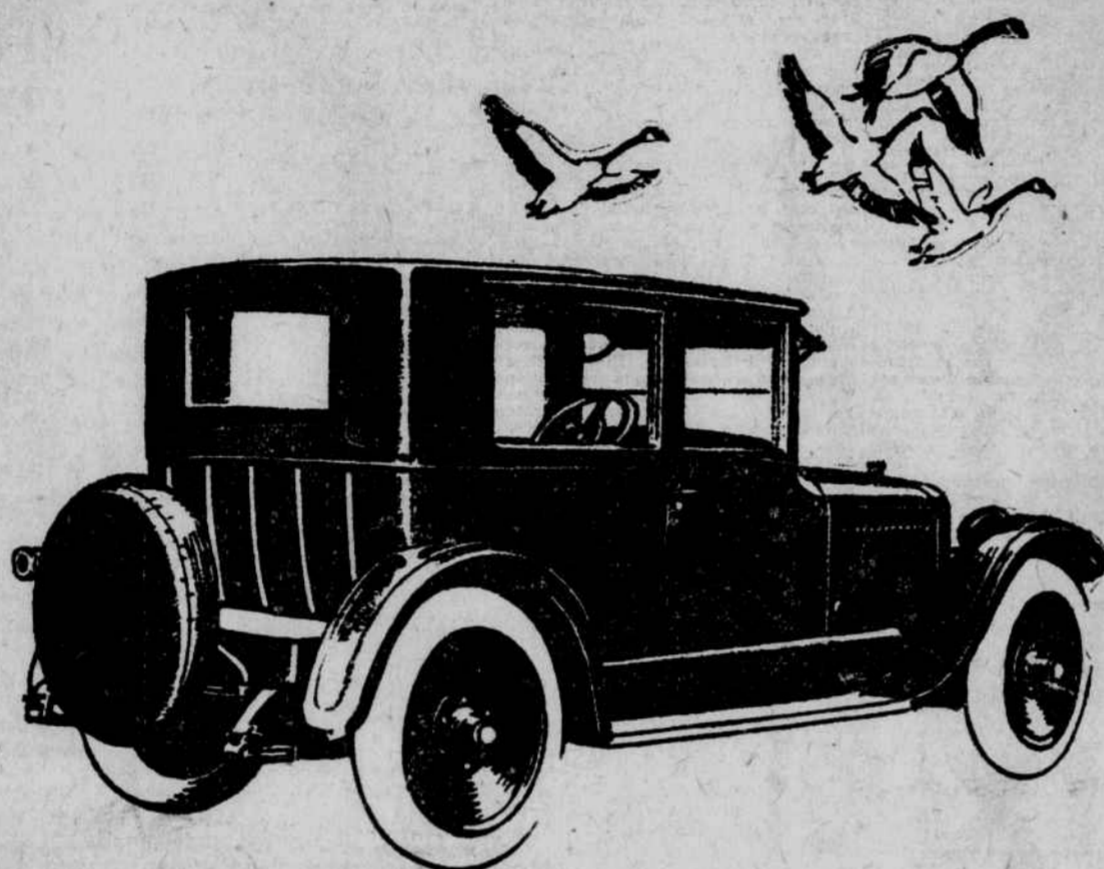
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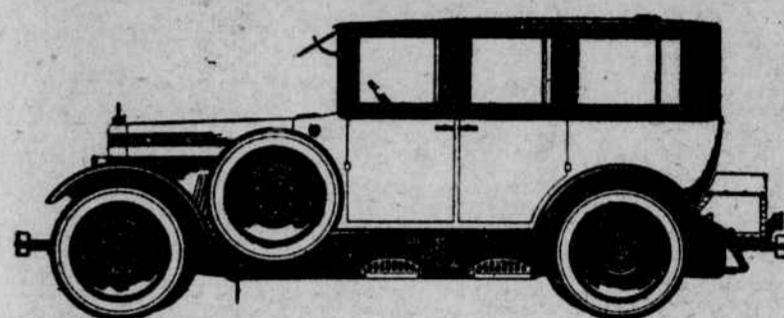
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